Oliver Lodge was one of the leading British physicists of the latter part of the nineteenth century. The work on electro-magnetic waves and the physics of the ether that established his scientific reputation, and that laid the foundations for the new technology of wireless telegraphy, was nearly all done in the 1880s and 1890s while he was a professor at Liverpool. During most of this period, Liverpool was also the home of a local Physical Society in which Lodge took a leading part. By drawing on Lodge's voluminous publications, correspondence, and note-books, and on the recently rediscovered records of the Liverpool Physical Society, Peter Rowlands in *Oliver Lodge and the Liverpool Physical Society* (Liverpool: U.P., for the Dept. of History, 1990; pp. 310. Pb. £15) is able to shed considerable light on aspects of Lodge's life and work. More importantly, and more originally, he is able to fill out our picture of the local context in which science was pursued at a time when national institutions and the emergent new universities were rapidly taking over the role aspired to by provincial groups like that in Liverpool. Rowlands sometimes strains unnecessarily to relate Lodge's work to the concerns of later physicists, and his two story-lines about Lodge and the Society sometimes diverge more than one would like. But by 'placing' Lodge firmly within a Liverpool context and by showing how his wider success was rooted in part in local circumstances, Rowlands has made a valuable contribution to the social history of an important period in British science.

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